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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that good child care jobs are the cornerstone of high-quality services for children and families, this booklet details workplace standards for family child care providers. The booklet is designed to be used for educating family child care providers, evaluating individual family child care programs, setting goals and measuring success, and enlisting the wider community in advocating for the resources that family child care providers need. Following an introduction describing the development of the model work standards and how they may be used, the booklet is divided into five parts. Part 1 describes the elements of a model contract or parent-provider agreement, and program policies that affect the quality of the provider's work environment. Part 2 addresses the professional development needs of providers. Part 3 looks at the home as a work environment, and sets criteria for assessing quality from the perspective of a provider's needs. Part 4 applies to providers who employ co-teachers, assistants, or other helpers. Part 5 features the importance of community support for creating better child care jobs. Seven appendices include worksheets and information on the legal impact of antitrust laws and family child care accreditation. (Contains 13 references.) (KB)

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Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs:

Model Work Standards

Center for the Child Care Workforce
Washington, D.C.

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We would like to thank the many family child care providers from all over the country who contributed their ideas to this booklet. We received comments, first through our "Good Child Care Jobs = Good Care for Children" postcard campaign, and then in response to a series of drafts circulated through conferences and other training events. Special thanks for their thoughtful feedback go to Kathy Modigliani and Alison Lutton of the Family Child Care Project, Wheelock College; Joan Laurion, Wisconsin provider, author and adult educator; Tom Copeland of Redleaf Press; members of the Worthy Wage Campaign Executive Council; and the following individual providers and agency representatives: Dolly Papuga, Tina Jiminez, Kristin Pickering, Judy Victor, Vicki Bulleg, Marcia Scheer, Kathleen Duppong, Betsy Loeb, Vilo Westwood, Maggie Summers, Cynthia Wolfe, Debbie Hayes, Mary Dunphy, Noreen King, Tammy Allen, Nancy Gerber, Denise Tepfenhart, Alexis Holbrook, Wendy Wayne, Alice Baldini, Tammy Allen, LaVonne Obrist, Cassie Williams, Sandy Garski, and Verla Muler.

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We welcome your feedback on this document for future editions.

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The Center for the Child Care Workforce

The Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) was founded in 1978 as the Child Care Employee Project, and was known as the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force from 1994 to 1997. CCW is a nonprofit research, education and advocacy organization committed to improving child care quality by upgrading the compensation, working conditions and training of child care teachers and family child care providers. CCW coordinates two major efforts to promote leadership and career advancement for teachers and providers: the Worthy Wage Campaign and the Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance.

THE WORTHY WAGE CAMPAIGN

Whether we call ourselves child care workers, family child care providers, preschool or early childhood teachers, teacher assistants or caregivers, we work in a field where most people are undervalued and underpaid—a field that is continually losing its best workers because of poor wages and benefits. The Worthy Wage Campaign is a nationwide grassroots effort to empower ourselves to mobilize to reverse the child care staffing crisis. Together, we strengthen our voices, foster respect, and promote accessible and affordable high-quality early care and education to meet the diverse needs of children and families.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTORING ALLIANCE

Throughout the country, mentoring programs have emerged as one of the most promising strategies to retain experienced teachers and providers, to support newcomers to the field, and to guarantee more reliable, high-quality care for young children. Mentor teachers and providers gain new respect from co-workers and parents, renew their commitment to working with children, and usually receive additional compensation. The Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance is a national forum for sharing ideas, information and technical assistance among mentors, program developers and policy makers.

When you become a member of the Center for the Child Care Workforce, you receive:

- our biannual bulletin, *Rights, Raises, Respect: News and Issues for the Child Care Workforce*;
- child care policy updates and action alerts; and
- discounts on selected CCW publications.

Most of all, you gain a direct link to a growing movement to guarantee the child care profession the compensation, recognition and respect it deserves. Join us!

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Preamble

These Model Work Standards are built on the premise that good child care jobs are the cornerstone of high-quality services for children and families. These standards

DECLARE:

- the right of family child care providers to work under conditions that reflect and reward their skills, knowledge, experience, and contributions to society; and
- the necessity for family child care providers to work actively to improve their working conditions and make decisions that affect their work lives.

ACKNOWLEDGE:

- the complexity of family child care jobs, which require knowledge of child development and business management, emotional strength, constant vigilance and creativity, intense human interaction every day all day long, a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence in order to instill the same in children, and a commitment to fostering human development in children and the other adults involved in their care, especially parents; and
- child care work for what it is: the responsibility and challenge of nurturing the future of our society.

The intent of these standards is that those who choose family child care as a career can reasonably and responsibly support their own families without having to hold second jobs or be dependent on another wage earner. It is also our intent that family child care providers can feel pride in their career choice, rather than constantly defending it to others or questioning it themselves. In short, these standards are about:

RIGHTS, RAISES AND RESPECT
FOR THE CHILD CARE WORKFORCE

Introduction

Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards represents a vision for the future of family child care. But this document can also remind us not only of where we are going, but how far we have come. As a profession, family child care has made dramatic strides. We have moved from a time when all care was paid for at an hourly rate, to having signed agreements or contracts with parents about financial arrangements... from seeing ourselves as not only providing child care but running a small business...from "babysitting" to "caring and educating," and in some cases pursuing accreditation standards. More and more family child care support groups and associations are breaking barriers of isolation. More and more providers are backing up their claims to professionalism by pursuing credentials in early childhood education.

This is the path that family child care is on, but it is still our challenge, in the words of the Civil Rights movement song, to "keep our eyes on the prize": a fully-funded, high-quality child care system that is affordable and accessible to all, *and* that honors and facilitates the work that family child care providers do.

We have designed this book with several purposes in mind. *Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs* is:

- **an educational tool** for articulating what family child care providers need in order to have a high-quality work environment.
- **an assessment tool** for evaluating how an individual family child care program measures up to providing a high-quality workplace.
- **a planning tool** for setting goals and measuring success.
- **an organizing tool** for enlisting the wider community—parents, professional associations, support agencies, business, labor, government, and the early care and education profession—in advocating for the resources that family child care providers need.

At first glance, you may look at these workplace standards and say, *"This is impossible,"* or *"I must not be doing things right,"* or *"I'll never get there."* But the intent of Model Work Standards is not to compare one provider to another, or to motivate providers out of a sense of guilt or shame. Many of the standards rely on a greater public investment in child care, and significant community support for family child care—matters that are beyond any individual provider's control. Nonetheless, the standards do represent a vision that we can strive towards. Every provider has a starting place, a point at which she or he can say, *"I can improve this"*—and that's where change begins.

A provider in Powell, Ohio, put it this way: *"If all of the elements contained in this book could be implemented, then I feel that many more people would be willing to enter this occupation. I also feel that there would be a lot less burnout. A happy provider creates a more fun and creative environment for children."*

Why do we need Model Work Standards?

GOOD CHILD CARE JOBS = GOOD CARE FOR CHILDREN.

Current research on the care and education of young children documents the validity of this equation. The daily experiences of family child care providers underscore this relationship. Yet most child care jobs do not pay a living wage, and many fall short as environments that enable providers to offer the best care and education for children. A truly high-quality child care program needs to carry two marks of distinction: one that recognizes an excellent learning environment for children, and one that recognizes a high-quality working environment for the adults caring for and educating them.

MODEL WORK STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS WORKING TOGETHER.

National family child care accreditation standards identify the type of environment and activities that promote children's learning and development. The Model Work Standards have been developed to complete the picture of a high-quality family child care program by defining the components of the adult work environment that enable providers to do their jobs well and to continue on the job for a longer time. While there may be some overlap between these two kinds of standards, this document is meant to complement, not replace, accreditation standards. It is possible to become accredited without meeting the standards presented here, but maintaining a high level of quality over time depends on a provider feeling rewarded by her work and able to meet her needs, as well as the needs of her own family. See page 36 for more information about family child care accreditation.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE FAMILY CHILD CARE PROFESSION.

Given the current financing of child care in our country, family child care providers—even more than center-based teachers—are aware on a day-to-day basis that their livelihood depends on the very personal exchange of money from parents' hands to their own. But this personal exchange, which is a great strength of family child care, can also be an obstacle in promoting a high-quality work environment.

Providers are self-employed business people who are able to make their own decisions about their work environment through contracts and program policies. When you need to assert your right to an income that sustains your family, there is no one else that you need to be accountable to. But because family child care operates on such a small human scale, relationships with families tend to be intimate. It can be very difficult to charge the true value of your service when there is no "buffer" between your needs and the needs of the families you serve. In a larger child care program, the teacher providing the care is rarely the one that collects the fees; this role is played by an administrator or bookkeeper who is more detached from the relationship.

As a small business, family child care also requires you to perform a multitude of tasks on your own—everything from marketing the program and recruiting clients, to caring for a mixed age group of children, cooking, cleaning, shopping for food and supplies, record-keeping and more. And family child care programs do not always have access to the resources that are available to child care centers. In order to stay in business, providers sometimes sacrifice quality by maximizing ratios, working long hours, failing to provide enough toys and materials, or not taking care of their own needs for such things as health insurance, vacation time,

retirement savings and other work-related matters.

Because of the small scale and intimate setting of family child care, a single tool in the form of a model contract could never account for all the variability among providers, the families they serve, the economics of the communities they live in, or the community resources that are available locally. These Model Work Standards, then, serve as guidelines for setting fees, modifying contracts, and financial planning. They are also a reminder that you can take charge of your own work environment. And as a self-employed entrepreneur, you may have found other unique ways to manage your financial, professional, family and health needs that we have not thought of in developing this book. The Model Work Standards are a tool to help you improve upon what you already have—but we can't do it alone. For both center-based teaching staff and family child care providers, the standards can also help amplify our call for a greater investment of public funds to support our nation's child care system.

How were the Model Work Standards created?

The Worthy Wage Campaign, coordinated by the Center for the Child Care Workforce, began in 1991 as a multi-year effort led by child care teachers and family child care providers around the country. Our goal is to draw attention to the importance of child care work and the critical need to improve child care jobs. In 1996 and 1997, the Campaign engaged child care teachers, family child care providers and center directors around the country in a national postcard campaign, as well as community-based consensus-building activities such as focus groups, house parties, workshops and other gatherings, to answer two key questions: "What is a high-quality work environment?," and "What needs to be changed to improve your job and your capacity to be effective in it?" Feedback from the field, combined with research findings on best practices, form the basis of these standards.

The first document to be published, *Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care*, was released in the spring of 1998. Recognizing the uniqueness of the family child care setting, we used what we had learned and targeted our outreach to providers in developing this publication. We anticipate that we may need to alter or refine these standards as we gain new insights from other providers, which will inevitably strengthen this tool and build our movement for worthy wages, good working conditions, and viable family child care businesses. Much of the feedback we received from the field is also reflected in "Tips for Success: Advice from Providers," page 33, which lists strategies that have helped providers enhance their financial success.

How are the Model Work Standards organized?

This document is divided into five parts:

- **Part 1** describes the elements of a model contract or parent-provider agreement, and program policies that affect the quality of the provider's work environment.
- **Part 2** addresses the professional development needs of providers.
- **Part 3** looks at the home as a work environment, and sets criteria for assessing quality from the perspective of a provider's needs.
- **Part 4** is applicable to providers who employ co-teachers, assistants or other helpers.

- **Part 5** identifies the community resources that are needed to assure high-quality family child care jobs.

Some standards also indicate two possible levels of quality: a **high-quality** level and a **striving** level. For many family child care programs, meeting a standard at the "striving level" will reflect significant progress in improving the work environment.

A family child care program that meets *75% of the standards in Parts 1, 2, 3 and 4 (if applicable) at the striving level* is worthy of recognition for providing a good adult work environment. You will note that Part 5 simply lists the community supports that contribute to creating good family child care jobs, as an opportunity for you to check whether they exist where you live. But while you as a provider cannot control on your own what, if any, community support is available to you, knowing the possibilities can influence you, your fellow providers, and parents to become better advocates for what you need.

How do I use the Model Work Standards?

We recognize that improving a work environment requires an investment of time, energy and money. Your program may already meet many of the standards, and others may seem within your grasp. Some will be unattainable within the current scope of your budget, and some will depend on the community in which you live. Some changes or improvements may require a minimal financial cost, while others may challenge you to re-prioritize your existing resources, raise your rates, or find additional funding sources. Still others may call for a community-wide plan to unite forces and take action. These standards, especially those that require greater resources, are included not to frustrate you, but to help us all hold fast to a vision of a good family child care jobs, our goals for change, and the need for greater public investment in our child care system. The Model Work Standards are intended to be used:

- by family child care providers as a vehicle for immediately beginning to improve their work environment and job conditions;
- in local communities, where representatives of family child care programs and support agencies can identify cooperative ventures to improve the child care infrastructure; and
- with policy makers and funders to raise awareness about the amount of resources that will be necessary to make lasting, comprehensive improvements in the nation's child care system.

A Note of Caution: While engaging in professional support activities is an essential part of creating good family child care jobs, as specified in these standards, providers must be aware that by law you may not come together for the purpose of setting specific rates or fees in your community. See "The Legal Impact of Antitrust Laws on Family Child Care Providers," page 35, in the Appendices.

USING THE STANDARDS IN YOUR PROGRAM.

The following steps can help you develop an action plan which you can then present to parents, whose support and involvement is very important.

1. *Assess your current working environment using the Model Work Standards.* Looking at each standard, determine

whether your program meets this particular goal. If it does, check the box to the left of the standard.

2. ***Determine your priorities for improvement.*** For those standards which your program does not consistently meet, determine which are of higher and lower priority. Setting priorities means taking the time to reflect on what you really want or need. Invite your own family members, employees if you have them, and those who know your business well (perhaps someone who has provided good advice in the past) to take part in this conversation. Make a list of the standards that would really make a difference to you, then rank them in order of importance and by how "do-able" they are. Focus first on a standard that ranks high on both of these lists. Achieving some success, even on a relatively small item, can encourage you to take further action.

3. ***Make an action plan.*** Use the steps outlined in the Action Plan Work Sheet on page 38, or simply copy the work sheet for each standard you address. Start by identifying a standard that you believe will be both achievable and meaningful to you, and then be specific about the change you desire. For example, "I will increase my number of paid sick days from zero to five days per year." Your action plan should also include a timeline: specifying, for example, when you will alert parents of the change, and when it will be added to your contract. Finally, your action plan might list the kinds of support, resources, and people who need to be involved to help you achieve your goal: for example, other local providers who have successfully put sick days into their contracts, and sympathetic parents who could talk to other parents.

4. ***Determine the cost for each of your top priorities.*** It is important to place a dollar amount on the various goals you have set. Some programs decide how much money they can allocate for program improvement or how much money they are committed to raising in order to make changes. This amount may start small and increase each year (e.g., $500 the first year, $1,500 the next year and $3,000 by year three). The standard you select to work on must fit into your annual budget.

5. ***Document your progress.*** This will help you evaluate, learn from and adapt your strategies in order to sustain continued efforts. You are also in the best position to encourage other providers to create better family child care jobs!

6. ***Celebrate and broadcast your accomplishments.*** Every victory, no matter how large or small, moves you closer to your goal of achieving a good work environment and a viable family child care business.

USING THE STANDARDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

Model Work Standards can help child care programs gain community-wide recognition for offering a high-quality work environment for family child care providers, and they also offer parents another important way to gauge a program's quality. We therefore recommend using these standards with the broader early childhood community, including resource and referral agencies, early childhood training institutions, child care advocacy groups, professional associations, and provider support groups, so that together you can:

- support providers who are engaged in improving family child care jobs,
- inform all providers—those just entering the field, as well as seasoned profession-

als—that these standards exist and that they can be useful in making decisions about future professional growth,

- identify potential resources and funding opportunities for improving the family child care work environment,
- promote careers in family child care that value a quality work environment,
- educate consumers about quality family child care,
- broadcast the successes of family child care programs and showcase model work sites, and
- engage in community-wide action to address some of the most difficult standards to achieve, such as affordable health care coverage and provider substitute pools.

Who can I talk to about using the Model Work Standards?

The staff of the Worthy Wage Campaign at the Center for the Child Care Workforce are available to talk with CCW members about your particular situation, getting started in your community, and connecting with other providers who are using the Model Work Standards. We want to hear how you have successfully used the standards so that we can share your successes with others. And we also welcome your feedback on this document so that we can keep improving it. Keep in mind...

Something is better than nothing.

More is better than less.

Sooner is better than later.

DON'T HESITATE....GET STARTED TODAY.

PART 1: MODEL CONTRACT & PROGRAM POLICIES

The criteria in this section are intended as guidelines for developing a family child care contract or parent-provider agreement, or assessing your current one, and for developing program policies as they relate to your work environment. Note: These criteria do not address all the policies regarding the operation of your program that you would include in your information to parents. Standards that address the learning environment for children and other aspects of your program can be found in the standards for family child care accreditation. See page 36 for more information on accreditation.

CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER INCOME** For more discussion of setting fees based on the full cost of quality child care, and on calculating a family-supporting income, see "Notes on Provider Income" and the "Full Cost of Care Worksheet" in the Appendices, pages 28-32.	ESSENTIAL
			1.1 The fees charged for child care, in combination with other sources of income for the child care business, guarantee that all reasonable and customary expenses will be met and that the provider has: • an income that at minimum is sufficient to support a family in the provider's community, and is ideally comparable to others in the community with similar levels of education, experience and responsibility, • health care coverage that fully covers the provider and any dependents not covered under an alternate health care plan, and • savings to assure self-sufficiency in retirement.	
			1.2 High-quality Level: The provider receives an annual cost-of-living increase as reflected in increased fees. In addition, until provider compensation reaches a level that is comparable to that of others in the community with similar levels of education, experience and responsibility, there is an additional annual fee increase.	✓
			Striving Level: The provider receives an annual cost-of-living increase as reflected in increased fees.	

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER INCOME**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			1.3 The provider's income is guaranteed by a written provider-parent contract which stipulates that: • all contracted hours are paid for in full, regardless of a child's attendance, and • fees are paid in full when the program has an unexpected closure due to provider illness or family emergency. A maximum number of paid days for such closures may be established in the contract.	✓
			1.4 Fee and payment schedules are revised to reflect changes in state reimbursement rates for subsidized child care whenever these occur.	
			1.5 When the provider achieves a higher level of formal education (e.g. earns a degree or credential in early childhood education) or becomes nationally accredited, she has the flexibility guaranteed in her contract to revise her fee and payment schedule to reward this achievement.	
			1.6 Financial records, including an operating budget, are used to gauge the program's stability.	✓
			1.7 A record-keeping system is in place to maximize business deductions available to the provider and to assure compliance with tax laws.	
			1.8 The program is covered by insurance policies, including program liability insurance, homeowners insurance, disability insurance for the provider, and vehicle insurance if the program sometimes transports children. (Note: Many providers may find it difficult to obtain disability insurance, but we consider it essential to have the other forms of insurance listed here.)	✓
			1.9 For the purpose of setting and collecting fees, the provider requests parents to check with their employers about pre-tax child care benefits, and/or with local agencies about child care subsidies.	

NOTES ON PROVIDER INCOME:

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER BENEFITS**	ESSENTIAL
			1.10 High-quality Level: The provider receives one paid sick/personal day per month, which can be taken to care for sick family members as well. Up to ten days can be carried into the next year.	✓
			Striving Level: The provider receives a minimum of five paid sick/personal days per year, which can be taken to care for sick family members as well. One year's worth of sick/personal leave may be carried over from one year to the next.	
			1.11 High-quality Level: The provider receives payment for eight to ten holidays per year, which are paid in full by families whose contracted hours fall on these days. When holidays fall on a weekend, the day before or after is taken as the paid holiday.	✓
			Striving Level: The provider receives payment for seven holidays per year, which are paid in full by families whose contracted hours fall on these days. Note: Typical paid holidays include: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Alternative holidays based on a provider's religious or cultural traditions may be substituted.	
			1.12 High-quality Level: The provider earns ten days of paid vacation per year. This number increases to 15 days for five years or more. Unpaid vacation leave may be negotiated with parents as specified in the contract.	✓
			Striving Level: The provider earns five days of paid vacation per year during the first two years of providing care. In subsequent years, this number increases to ten days. Unpaid vacation leave may be negotiated with parents in the contract. Note: Rather than charging parents for care during the provider's vacation, a "vacation fee" may be included in the regular weekly or monthly fee, as long as parents clearly understand the purpose of this additional charge.	
			1.13 High-quality Level: The provider receives three paid days per year to enhance her professional development.	✓
			Striving Level: The provider receives two paid days per year to enhance her professional development.	

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER BENEFITS**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			1.14 In the event that the provider must take a maternity leave, she may take all accrued sick and vacation time, billing parents for this portion of her leave.	
			1.15 High-quality Level: The provider has a plan which guarantees that eight to ten percent of net earnings are set aside for retirement.	
			Striving Level: The provider has a plan which guarantees that five percent of net earnings are set aside for retirement.	
			1.16 At least annually, the provider assesses the impact of her income and benefits on her ability to provide quality child care.	

NOTES ON PROVIDER BENEFITS:

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **HOURS OF WORK**	ESSENTIAL
			1.17 In calculating hours worked, for the purpose of setting fees, the provider includes time for planning, preparation, cleaning, shopping, record-keeping, and conversing with enrolled or prospective parents.	✓
			1.18 The provider establishes a work schedule that allows her the break time and respite she needs to maintain the energy and stamina required for caring for children. This may be reflected in: • the number of hours worked per day or per week • enrollment patterns that ensure some "down time" during the day • the use of qualified assistants or family members to be on-site during "down times" such as naptime • a system of parent volunteers and/or family members to take on or help with certain program tasks, such as food shopping, child care laundry, and equipment repairs • employment of substitute providers as needed, or the employment of a regular assistant provider • contracting out for certain services, such as food catering, cleaning and maintenance, and/or tax preparation.	

NOTES ON HOURS OF WORK:

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER-PARENT COMMUNICATION**	ESSENTIAL
			1.19 The provider and parents sign a contract that defines: • hours of care • fee schedule and payment policies, including late fees for overdue payments, overtime rates for late pick-ups, and fees for non-contracted hours if provided (such as drop-in during unscheduled time, weekend or overnight care) • other charges, which may include but are not limited to: registration or other administrative fees, meal expenses (if not on the Child and Adult Care Food Program), special activity fees, infant supplies, an annual continuing education fund for the provider, fees for returned checks, fees associated with any court or collection agency costs incurred in the collection of overdue payments, and fees associated with seeking emergency medical attention • policies covering absences of the provider and children, including vacation, holiday and sick leave • termination of care, including but not limited to: a trial period upon initial enrollment, a process for conflict resolution, a notification period in which full fees are paid, and conditions warranting immediate termination • a provision for contract updates and renewals, occurring at least annually • parents' responsibility for finding alternate care, and/or circumstances under which provider hires a substitute; minimal qualifications of substitutes; and an emergency back-up plan for substitutes.	

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROVIDER-PARENT COMMUNICATION**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			1.20 Written program policies are provided to all parents, specifying such things as emergency procedures, discipline and guidance policies, and the daily schedule. Also included are: • a job description for the provider which, in addition to the care and education of children, includes such tasks as program planning, record keeping, budgeting, shopping for groceries and program materials, food preparation, and cleaning and maintaining the child care environment • the provider's professional credentials and/or level of education in child care and development • a statement of how the program is regulated (for example, licensed, certified or registered by the state), and where parents can get more information on state child care regulations and their rights as consumers • a statement of philosophy and program goals, reviewed annually with the parents of children enrolled • a list of items that parents are expected to provide to the program for their child's care, if any (such as diapers, food, formula, clothing, or bedding).	
			1.21 Ongoing communication mechanisms ensure that parents are informed about new procedures, policies and events, and build a partnership with parents for the care and education of their child. This can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to bulletin boards, newsletters, daily activity reports, journals, phone conversations, parent-provider conferences, an "open door" visitation policy, parent volunteer opportunities, pot-lucks and other social activities, and fundraising projects.	✓
			1.22 Parents are aware of the family child care budget, particularly the expenses involved in the operation of the program.	

NOTES ON PROVIDER-PARENT COMMUNICATION:

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PART 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your work environment as a family child care provider is enhanced when you approach your job with confidence in your skills, and with knowledge of child development and small business management. As in all professions, a family child care provider's education deserves to be viewed as a lifelong process. But professional development for providers also poses unique barriers, some of which are addressed in Part 5, "Community Support for Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs."

CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**	ESSENTIAL
			2.1 The provider has received education in child development and in small business management, including the special aspects of running a family child care business.	✓
			2.2 The provider has received training in child care health and safety issues, including those areas which affect her own well-being, and receives updated training as needed. This includes training on: • safe practices for lifting children and heavy objects, in order to prevent back and knee injuries • the management of infectious diseases and universal precautions for blood-borne pathogens • nutrition and safe food-handling practices • stress management and other issues related to the emotional and mental well-being of the provider and children.	✓
			2.3 The provider participates in continuing education. Her professional development time may be used for state-mandated training, college classes, professional conferences, observation time in other child care programs, and/or release time for child care advocacy activities.	✓
			2.4 The provider participates in ongoing anti-bias/anti-racism training as part of her professional development activity, with a focus on working with both adults and children.	✓

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			2.5 The program budget allocates an annual fund for professional development expenses, sufficient to cover the cost of training and related expenses, such as substitutes.	
			2.6 Through increased parent fees and/or other available subsidies (such as grant programs or differential reimbursement rates from the state), the provider is recognized and rewarded for attaining higher levels of formal education and/or accreditation.	
			2.7 The provider conducts an annual assessment of the quality of her program, including obtaining feedback from parents, and uses the results of this evaluation to plan her professional development activities.	
			2.8 The provider has peer support through either an informal network of providers or a more formal family child care support group, in order to engage in problem-solving with colleagues and to benefit from their experiences and encouragement.	✓
			2.9 The provider participates in a professional association, family child care support group, or early childhood organization as part of ongoing professional development.	
			2.10 The provider is aware of community supports that enhance professional development, such as family child care mentoring programs or leadership opportunities. (See "Community Support for Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs," Part 5.)	

NOTES ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

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PART 3: THE FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME AS A WORK ENVIRONMENT

To allow you to do your best work, the physical setting of the child care program must nurture not only the children but you as a provider. Because your work environment is also your home, you might assume when designing and equipping the space for child care that the space already meets your own needs, when in fact it does not. Typically, a child care environment is evaluated from the perspective of the children, not the provider. For this reason, a rationale (in italics) is provided for many of the standards in this section.

CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **WORK ENVIRONMENT**	ESSENTIAL
			3.1 The provider follows applicable state and local regulations regarding the physical space.	✓
			3.2 The arrangement of space, the daily schedule, and the use of materials are balanced to meet the needs of both the child care program and the provider's family.	
			3.3 Adult-sized chairs and work stations are available in the child care space of the home. The provider has a comfortable place to sit and be with children.	
			3.4 Regularly used equipment (such as diapering tables and infant carriers) and storage areas are designed at a height and location that allow the provider to use gestures and postures that are safe and comfortable. *[There is growing concern about the occupational hazards of providing child care. Of particular concern is the potential for stress on the provider's back and knees from moving children and equipment.]*	
			3.5 There is ample and easily accessible storage space. *[Convenient storage minimizes the dangers associated with clutter for both children and the provider, and accessible storage ensures appropriate supervision at all times. Good storage also maximizes the efficient use of space—a challenge in many family child care homes.]*	
			3.6 There is adequate space and enough toys and equipment to meet the developmental needs of the children enrolled. *[Inadequate space and resources often lead to additional stress for the provider, causing her to engage more constantly in behavior management and/or causing strain on her relationships with the children.]*	

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **WORK ENVIRONMENT**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			3.7 There is an office or designated area, equipped with a telephone, for conducting family child care business.	
			3.8 There is a place in the home for the provider and parents to meet together.	
			3.9 Included in the child care environment are artifacts, photographs and other objects that reflect the provider's life and family, as well as the lives of the children in care. *[Providing such objects creates a sense of belonging and community among all who share the space, including adults.]*	
			3.10 Clear policies delineate the conditions under which children are excluded from the family child care program because of illness, and these policies are consistently implemented. *[Such policies promote the physical well-being of the provider as well as the children in care.]*	
			3.11 Policies describe an emergency back-up plan in the event that care cannot be offered due to provider illness or injury, or a natural disaster (for example, what to do and where to go in the event of a fire, tornado or earthquake).	
			3.12 Copies of reports resulting from inspection of the child care home by building, health, safety or licensing officials are posted for parents (and employed staff, if any) to see. *[This practice may engage parents and others in helping to maintain a safe and healthy environment.]*	
			3.13 The provider is aware of community resources that can enhance the family child care home as a safe and healthy work environment. (See Part 5.)	

NOTES ON WORK ENVIRONMENT:

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PART 4: THE PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER

More and more providers are regularly employing others in the child care business, often as a way to maintain a consistent group size and age composition, ensure individual attention for each child every day, and alleviate the isolation that some providers feel when working alone. Increasing group size may also be a strategy for enhancing your income as a provider, but this must not come at the expense of an employee's well-being. We suggest that you use *Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care* (CCW, 1998) as a resource in establishing a good work environment for employees. The following are some standards from that document.

CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **THE PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER**	ESSENTIAL
			4.1 Employees are provided a written job description that is accurate and specific. Any changes in the job description are discussed with the employee prior to implementation.	✓
			4.2 Employees are evaluated at least annually on their job performance, and have an opportunity to evaluate themselves and their employer in the process. The evaluation procedure is discussed with the employee at the time of hire.	✓
			4.3 The provider offers an orientation to the program before the new employee takes on his/her responsibilities, including meeting the children and their families; a review of the program's policies, procedures and philosophy; any other "house rules" pertaining to your home; health and safety practices; and the employee's legal rights in the workplace.	
			4.4 An employment agreement identifies an equitable wage which reflects the employee's education, experiential background and job responsibilities.	✓
			4.5 Employees working over 20 hours per week on a regular basis have the following benefits pro-rated for the number of hours worked: health care coverage, paid sick and vacation leave, paid holidays, paid planning time, and a professional development fund.	
			4.6 The wage and benefit plan is reviewed annually, and employees receive at least an annual cost of living raise.	
			4.7 Employees are encouraged to participate in ongoing educational opportunities.	✓

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **THE PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			4.8 A grievance procedure is included in the employment agreement and is reviewed with the employee at the time of hire.	✓
			4.9 The employment agreement includes policies and procedures regarding termination procedures. Employees are not discharged without just cause, and whenever possible, a termination occurs only after the provider and employee have attempted to resolve the conflict.	✓
			4.10 An employee is informed of grounds for immediate dismissal upon employment. These include the display of physical violence to children, adults or property; a guilty verdict or substantiated state investigation of child abuse or neglect; evidence of alcohol and/or other drug abuse; misuse of funds; falsification of documents; and violation of confidentiality requirements.	✓
			4.11 Work schedules allow for paid breaks: at least 15 minutes for every four hours worked.	
			4.12 When a work schedule must be changed, advance notice of two weeks is given to the employee.	
			4.13 The provider offers the employee helpful, consistent and constructive feedback on job performance.	✓
			4.14 The provider and the employee, if working together with children, share observations and plan some activities together. They also keep each other informed of communication with parents/guardians and other family members.	
			4.15 Employees are involved in decision-making as it directly affects their day-to-day practice, and are engaged in setting program goals, measuring progress, and solving problems.	✓

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CONSISTENTLY MET	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/HIGH PRIORITY	PARTIALLY MET OR UNMET/LOW PRIORITY	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **THE PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER**—CONTINUED	ESSENTIAL
			4.16 The provider accepts responsibility for ensuring a safe and healthy working environment for employees.	✓
			4.17 The provider meets all state requirements regarding the hiring of employees, such as staff health reports, criminal records background checks, and documentation of education.	✓
			4.18 The provider assumes all legal responsibilities for the hiring of employees, such as paying the employer's share of social security and worker's compensation, as well as federal and state unemployment taxes. The provider is also aware of applicable state and federal labor laws; for example, by federal law, all hours worked over 40 hours per week must be paid at the overtime rate of time and a half.	✓
			4.19 The family child care program honors, respects, and affirms the culture and traditions of all employees of the program and all families served.	✓
			4.20 Employees are not discriminated against on the basis of race, color, age, religion, sex, handicap, marital status, political persuasion, national origin or ancestry, physical appearance, income level or source of income, student status, sexual preference, union activity, or criminal record except as required by licensing regulations.	✓

NOTES ON THE PROVIDER AS EMPLOYER:

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PART 5: COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CREATING BETTER CHILD CARE JOBS

Resources and support within a community can contribute tremendously to creating good family child care jobs. Unfortunately, what communities have to offer varies a great deal in terms of quantity, quality, and accessibility to the provider. Quantity of services, in fact, may not be the main issue: providers working in rural areas may have fewer community resources, but ones that are well-targeted and useful, while providers in a large city may be surrounded with resources that they know nothing about. There is potential to do more and to do better in both cases. While you as a provider cannot necessarily control what if any community support is available to you, knowledge of the possibilities can influence you as an advocate for better child care jobs.

AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY	NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**
		5.1 Qualified substitute/respite providers are available for the provider to take leave time when the child care program does not close, when family or personal emergencies arise, and when the provider is engaged in professional activities that take her away from the program.
		5.2 Professional support in the community is available to the provider, including but not limited to the following possibilities: • an organized substitute provider pool that screens and provides training for substitutes • technical assistance and consultation on such issues as program and business management, applying for loans or grants, and designing family child care environments • a resource and referral program that helps providers maintain their desired enrollment • access to the expertise of other professionals, such as nutritionists, social workers and health care practitioners.
		5.3 The provider has access to appropriate, affordable and relevant training and education that keeps her up-to-date on professional issues and offers new ideas for program planning. Access includes consideration for the time of day, the length of the training session, and the location. Basic to advanced-level training is available, preferably with college credit.

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AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY	NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**—CONTINUED
		5.4 Information about educational opportunities and funding for education is available to the provider through various community agencies, such as resource and referral agencies, licensing agencies and professional associations.
		5.5 Information is available to providers regarding involvement in professional associations, support groups and advocacy networks.
		5.6 Information is available to providers regarding resources and services for children with special needs and their caregivers. Included in this information is how to make appropriate referrals when necessary, and the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on the provider's enrollment practices.
		5.7 The provider has a network of peers, family and friends to help her counteract the sense of isolation that can arise in family child care.
		5.8 Opportunities exist for a new provider to work with a mentor during the first two years of operation, and for an experienced provider to mentor others. Mentors are also available for providers seeking accreditation. Mentoring programs include appropriate training and compensation for providers serving as mentors.
		5.9 Opportunities exist to network with center-based child care teachers in the community for the purposes of sharing information and resources, and working together on advocacy efforts.
		5.10 Opportunities exist to promote family child care providers as leaders in child care advocacy networks, community forums or committees, and the training of other providers.

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AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY	NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE	Model Work Standards For Family Child Care **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**—CONTINUED
		5.11 Resources are available to providers to offset some of the expenses of operating a family child care business. These could include, but are not limited to: • a toy, book and equipment lending service • traveling "curriculum enhancers," such as storytellers, dancers, musicians, scientists and other resource people who can share their talents in family child care programs • a professional library with books, journals, brochures, videotapes and other materials on issues of interest to family child care providers • business management tools and tax preparation assistance • access to technology, including computers, photocopiers, fax machines and e-mail • buying clubs to purchase food and/or other consumable supplies in bulk with other providers • cleaning services • maintenance and repair services • food preparation services • diaper services.
		5.12 A community-based "speakers bureau" and other public education activities engage providers and other community leaders in addressing parent concerns about child care issues, and enhance the image of family child care in the community.

NOTES ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT:

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Appendices

Notes on Provider Income

The issue of provider income—determining what is an equitable dollar amount for the purpose of creating good family child care jobs—is a complex one. The following discussion explores some of the issues from varied perspectives. In conversations with providers as we developed this resource, many spoke of the personal benefits of providing family child care, such as being able to work at home, staying at home with their children, and saving on their children's child care costs. But while these advantages and potential cost-savings are very important for many providers and their families, they do not outweigh the basic need and right for a working person to make a living wage. In many cases, the personal benefits of working in family child care do not make up for the poor pay that is typical in the profession. A number of providers, however, have shared with us the strategies they use to enhance their financial success. These can be found on pages 33-34.

THE CURRENT PICTURE.

Currently, a provider's income is the sum total of fees collected directly from families, plus any reimbursements she may receive for families whose child care is subsidized by government or community agencies, and/or reimbursements from the Child and Adult Care Food Program. According to a recent study of the economics of family child care (Modigliani et al., 1994), the picture is bleak, with over half of all U.S. providers earning less than the federally-established poverty level. The study found that providers' net income (i.e., gross income less direct business expenses) averages only $15,151 per year, and that when indirect expenses (i.e., the tax-deductible share of pro-rated home expenses) are calculated, the average provider's taxable income is $10,162 per year.[1]

Until we achieve the investment of public funds in our child care system that we truly need to fully meet the Model Work Standards, providers depend largely on a combination of strategies to take incremental steps to improve their jobs: raising the fees for their service, building community support and resources to offset some of the expenses involved in providing high-quality care, and fundraising activities.

THE FIRST STEP: BUDGETING FOR THE FULL COST OF QUALITY.

A plan for action begins with your family child care budget. It is not uncommon for a provider to set fees at least high enough to meet all her operating expenses; any money "left over," above and beyond what is needed to pay expenses, is then the provider's income. But in budgeting for "the full cost of quality," the provider factors her income into the budget from the beginning. The challenge is either to: a) calculate the amount you are currently "subsidizing" your own family child care business through foregone wages, by comparing yourself to others in the community with similar levels of skill, education and experience, or b) include in your expense budget a personnel line item that minimally pays you a "self-sufficiency" or "living wage." These strategies are discussed below.

[1] Amounts are reported in 1998 dollars; data collected in 1993 have been adjusted for inflation.

COMPARABLE WORTH.

To calculate "foregone wages," estimate the yearly pay you might receive in another job, plus the value of any paid fringe benefits in that job, such as health insurance, retirement benefits, vacation, sick and holiday pay, Social Security, and disability and unemployment insurance. This figure, minus your current yearly net income, is the amount of income you are "foregoing" by working in family child care instead of in another field. And it is a useful figure in developing an action plan that includes incremental fee increases over a certain period of time until you reach the "full cost of quality" per child in the program. The work sheet on pages 31-32 is a guide to calculating the full cost of family child care.

In selecting a comparable job, the responsibilities in family child care are clearly comparable to those of other educators with administrative responsibilities (for example, teacher-directors in center-based programs, or public school teachers), but educational credentials and experience must also be taken into consideration. Other work that could be considered comparable includes certain health care professional jobs, and other small businesses, particularly home-based enterprises.

A SELF-SUFFICIENCY OR LIVING WAGE.

There are several ways that communities have determined what is an adequate wage for someone to earn in their area, in order to get by without relying on any form of public or private assistance. This is then used as a rock-bottom, minimum "self-sufficiency wage" or "living wage" figure in a variety of advocacy efforts. Unfortunately, due to wide variations in the cost of living among different parts of each state and the country as a whole, it is not possible or appropriate to recommend a single set of salary levels that would fit every community. Factoring a "self-sufficiency" or living wage into your budgeted expenses requires calculating a reasonable local figure for your area.

When it was first developed, the federal minimum wage served the function of reflecting a decent subsistence level for a working American, but it has long stopped keeping pace with inflation, and is now well below what is needed to stay economically afloat anywhere in the United States. Given the current picture in family child care, however, even budgeting to earn a minimum wage would be a positive step for many providers! And in determining a decent wage for family child care, we must also take into account the length of a typical provider's work week. The Economics of Family Child Care study found that providers work an average of 55 hours per week with children, and an additional 12 hours in program-related shopping, cleaning, preparation and record-keeping (Modigliani et al., 1994).

Some communities have established Living Wage Campaigns—coalitions which engage people in a local consensus-building process to calculate the costs of various basic goods and services. The figure could be defined as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the federal poverty level. In one community, for example, the 'living wage' has been set by advocates at 110% of the poverty level for a family of four, plus health care coverage. In another, it has been set at $7.00 per hour if benefits are included, and $8.50 per hour if they are not.

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), a women's employment organization based in Washington, D.C., uses the term 'self-sufficiency wage.' They have prepared county-by-county calculations in several states and the District of Columbia of a "Self-Sufficiency Standard": the hourly wage a worker (with a variety of different family configurations) needs to earn in order to be economically self-

sufficient. To reach these figures, WOW measured the average basic costs in each county of housing, public transportation, food, licensed child care, one-third of health care expenses, and taxes. The figures assume that the worker is able to obtain all of these in the regular marketplace without outside assistance—i.e. without any use of public housing, welfare payments, child care subsidy, food banks, etc.

Family size is also an important variable. Setting a standard that is appropriate only for a single adult has serious pitfalls. It perpetuates the idea that a family child care provider must have a partner or spouse who earns a better income and can take on a disproportionate share of a family's economic responsibilities. Calculating a self-sufficiency wage for a family of 3 or 4 members would come closer to reflecting reality: namely, that a very high percentage of family child care providers are working to support their families.

While it takes more work to engage in a community process of deciding on a 'living wage' or 'self-sufficiency wage' figure, rather than using a single, one-size-fits-all number, it is really the only way to measure what a decent, minimum level of earnings should be where you live.

For more information on Living Wage Campaigns, contact the Public Policy Department, AFL-CIO, (202) 637-5177.

Wider Opportunities for Women has completed Self-Sufficiency Standards for California, the District of Columbia, Iowa, Maryland (Montgomery and Prince George's Counties), North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia (City of Alexandria, and Arlington and Fairfax Counties). Self-Sufficiency Standards are pending for Illinois, Indiana, New York City and Massachusetts. To learn more or to develop a Standard for your county or state, send a letter of inquiry to "Self-Sufficiency Standard" at: WOW, 815 15th Street, N.W., Suite 916, Washington, DC 20005; fax: (202) 638-4885; e-mail: info@w-o-w.org.

Full Cost of Care Worksheet:

Achieving a Fair Wage and Reasonable Benefits

The cost of family child care to parents or government sponsors is typically "subsidized" by providers in the form of foregone wages they would earn in a comparable job. The full cost of family child care would include all of a provider's expenses, as well as an equitable wage and fringe benefits for the provider. To calculate a fair wage, follow these steps:

SECTION A. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT NET INCOME, INCLUDING ANY FRINGE BENEFITS?

A.1 Current Total Gross Receipts or Income $_____

Using your most recent tax returns, this figure corresponds to IRS Schedule C, line 1. Be sure this amount includes all income from parent fees and any other child care subsidies, including food program reimbursements and other sources of income.

A.2 Subtract total expenses:

Expenses deducted on IRS Schedule C. These are the yearly out-of-pocket costs of providing family child care that are legally deductible (typically 25-35% of income) $_____

Direct Expenses for Business Use of the Home. This figure is calculated on IRS form 8829. $_____

Total Expenses: *the above two figures added together* $_____

A.3 Current Net Yearly Income

Subtract A.2 from A.1. This figure includes the amount you already pay for your benefits. $_____

SECTION B: HOW MUCH MORE INCOME WOULD YOU NEED TO ACHIEVE A FAIR WAGE AND REASONABLE BENEFITS WHILE KEEPING YOUR EXPENSES THE SAME?

B.1 Estimate a fair yearly salary for your child care services.

Consider another job you might hold in the community, which includes paid sick, vacation and holiday benefits. Take into consideration your education and experience, as well as the cost of living in your community. $_____

B.2 Add 25% of line B.1 for fringe benefits. $_____

Includes health insurance, retirement and Social Security. 10% of this amount would go to meet Model Work Standard 1.15, page 14 (retirement savings), at the high-quality level.

B.3 Full Cost of Quality" Income $_____
Add B.1 and B.2.

B.4 The difference between line B.3 and A.3 $_____
Subtract A.3 from B.3. This is the amount you need to add to your current income to achieve a fair wage and reasonable benefits. This figure reflects your "foregone earnings"—the amount at which your current low earnings "subsidize" the family child care business.

SECTION C: HOW CAN YOU WORK TOWARD ACHIEVING THIS "FULL COST OF QUALITY" INCOME, AS ESTIMATED IN LINE B.3?

You can take steps to decrease the gap between what you earn now and what you deserve. The following are some possible strategies:

- Develop a five-year (or more) plan to steadily increase your rates.
  If you are working on a multi-year plan to increase your income, adjust your figures yearly for inflation. Remember that if you increase your expenses, you will need to increase your rates accordingly in order to maintain your advances in salary and benefits.
- Add *paid* vacation, sick, personal and professional development days with each contract renewal with parents.
- Decrease your expenses through such activities as:
  - bartering arrangements
  - volunteers
  - fundraising for program needs
  - sharing expenses, equipment and services with other providers.
- Supplement your income with grants and higher-tier reimbursements. (Higher reimbursement rates are available in some states for providers who have demonstrated higher quality through National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accreditation or achieving the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- Become an advocate in your community for the support and resources that quality family child care needs.
- List other ideas here:

This worksheet was developed by family child care providers Joan Laurion and Peggy Haack of Madison, Wis., and Kathy Modigliani, The Family Child Care Project, Wheelock College, Boston, Mass.

Tips for Success: Advice from Providers

Around the country, we heard from many providers who were anxious to share the strategies they use to boost the success of their family child care businesses. Some may be useful to you, and others may not, but all reflect a commitment to improving family child care jobs and improving the quality of care we offer to children and families. Consider any of the following:

SETTING FEES

- Talk about the cost of the service, and not about market rates, when discussing fees with parents. When providers set their fees based solely on market rates, they perpetuate the already depressed salaries in the field.
- Charge more per hour for part-time care than full-time.
- Charge differential rates for various ages, e.g. a higher rate for infants and toddlers than preschoolers.
- Eliminate second-child and relative discounts; the cost of care is not lower for these children.
- Set a percentage of the regular rate as your overtime rate. For example, the Fair Labor Standards Act requires that employees be paid time-and-a-half (150%) for overtime work.

COLLECTING FEES

- Require that fees be paid before care is provided—this could be weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, or even over longer periods of time (e.g. a semester).
- State in your contract that you may take parents to Small Claims Court if they fall more than one month behind in their fee payments. Remind them of this policy if fees are late and follow through. If they know you are serious about this policy, you will probably never have to use it.
- Collect a deposit equal to a week or two of child care payments upon enrollment, to be refunded with two weeks' written notice of termination.

INCREASING FEES

- Increase fees when you achieve a higher educational credential in the field or when you achieve accreditation.
- Stick to an annual rate increase every year as stated in your contract (e.g. every September 1 or January 1).
- Set a timeline for reaching the "full cost of quality," which may mean raising your rates significantly each year. One provider in Madison, Wisconsin suggests raising your rates 10% each year over the cost of living until the desired income level is achieved.
- Improve your benefits with each contract renewal.

ALTERNATIVE FEE ARRANGEMENTS

- Consider instituting a sliding fee scale, with those on the high end of the income scale paying the full cost of quality family child care. A sliding scale divides families' incomes into several steps, and assigns a gradually increasing fee to each step. (See Path Finders Unlimited, 1993, for more information on sliding scales.)
- Consider whether you want to offer a discounted rate or scholarship for one or more families when establishing your annual rate increase. Consider the percentage of discount or how many scholarships you could offer, calculate what this would cost, and add this figure to your expenses before determining new fees.
- Consider bartering agreements with some parents, such as having them provide a service you need in exchange for part of their tuition. Consider how much the service is worth to you, and establish an hourly rate you would be willing to pay someone to provide it. Be sure to include a statement about what will happen if the parent doesn't live up to the written agreement. You will

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need to include the value of the bartered services when calculating your income taxes, but it may still be a reasonable option for both you and the parents.

CONTRACTS

- Have written contracts and policies in place before enrolling families—that is, before you have established close relationships.
- Keep the contract and program policies as two separate documents. You can change your program policies at will, but a contract is an agreement between you and the parents that is generally financial in nature.
- Make sure that parents sign their contract. Provide a copy for parents and keep the original on file. Request a signed statement from parents on their enrollment form that they have read and received a copy of their contract and a copy of your program policies and/or parent handbook.
- Provide a thorough initial interview to go over contracts and policies with parents item by item.

BUDGETING

- Establish a budget for your program based on the number of children for whom you can provide a quality program.
- Minimize the turn-around time to pick up new enrollments when vacancies occur: notify referral agencies quickly of vacancies, require paid notice for termination so that you are working to fill a slot while it is still being paid for, and keep a reasonable waiting list.
- Include marketing as a budgeted program expense, and market your program in terms of its quality. Work with fellow providers or other community resource people to help you articulate the value of what you do, and the relationship between provider compensation and the quality of your services.
- Inform parents about state subsidies for lower-income families and about tax credits for dependent care. Ask parents to check with their employers about pre-tax child care benefits. Refer to all of these options as "subsidies to help offset the rising cost of child care."
- Require parent participation in one or more fundraising activities each year for a specific purpose: for example, to purchase large equipment, pay for special enrichment activities, or contribute to your professional development fund.
- Offer opportunities for parent involvement: volunteering for specific tasks that you may otherwise hire someone to do (such as landscaping a play yard or installing a fence), donating useful items they may have in their homes or workplaces, sharing talents as part of your program, and participating in advocacy efforts aimed at increasing revenues and improving the work environment.

COST-SAVERS

- Enroll in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), especially if some of your families are lower-income or you live in a lower-income neighborhood.
- Use the services in your community available to you, such as toy lending services, neighborhood centers, libraries and museums, and resource and referral agencies.
- Start a "toy share" with other providers, exchanging items for a certain period of time either through a support group or just informally with other providers.
- Become an informed and wise consumer and grocery shopper. Take advantage of seasonal abundance and buy what you can from local producers.
- Increase income by reducing expenses: reduce waste, use fewer pre-processed foods, participate in group purchase of food and supplies, buy in bulk or at discount stores, plan ahead for necessary items and buy on sale, use community resources to the fullest, ask for donations from parents and local businesses, and keep good records so that you can take all legal tax deductions.

The Legal Impact of Antitrust Laws on Family Child Care Providers

According to antitrust laws in the United States, no business may enter into a contract or agreement that has the impact of restraining trade or commerce. "Price fixing"—which covers any agreement between businesses that affects the cost to consumers, including any restrictions on the availability of services—is one of the most commonly known activities seen as restraining trade.

In general, government bodies and "labor" (i.e., non-managerial employees) are exempt from antitrust laws. As a result, the staff of child care centers—or family child care providers' employees—are permitted to organize and to enter into agreements which could affect their wages and, potentially, the price of child care services for consumers. Likewise, the government can make recommendations, regulations and laws concerning wages and the price of child care.

But individual businesses, such as child care centers and family child care providers, cannot join together to agree to charge a certain rate, pay a certain wage, or maintain certain hours of operation. These activities would constitute price fixing and would violate the antitrust laws. Nothing in the law, however, prohibits an individual provider from making her own independent business decisions.

For-profit and nonprofit businesses, as well as membership organizations such as the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) or the Worthy Wage Campaign, which include members other than non-managerial employees, are also subject to antitrust laws. We at CCW could be found in violation of these laws if we recommended certain child care wage scales, or entered into any agreement to charge parents a certain fee, because we could be considered as benefiting financially from such activities.

These Model Work Standards are intended as general recommendations for how family child care providers can improve their income and working conditions. By law, however, CCW cannot recommend or suggest that family child care providers in a community come together and agree to set their fees at a certain rate. We are prohibited from doing so, just as family child care providers and center directors are, and nothing in this publication should be construed as encouraging or endorsing such an activity. The antitrust laws apply regardless of a group's motives, social justification, or level of ability to actually affect the market with its actions.

Activities aimed at raising public awareness about low wages, poor working conditions and high turnover in child care, however, are protected as "free speech" under the First Amendment. Anyone, therefore, may undertake these activities regardless of their status. (But keep in mind that if the main purpose for the activity is not public education, but raising wages, the activity could be ruled as a violation of the antitrust laws.) In addition, we can all lobby federal, state and local governments to intervene in the market to remedy the child care staffing crisis, for example by urging the government to raise its reimbursement rates to an amount that covers the true cost of providing quality child care.

Family Child Care Accreditation

The Family Child Care Accreditation Project has worked with providers, parents and other experts across the country to create an accreditation system for the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), launched in January 1999. Together, NAFCC and the Family Child Care Project at Wheelock College have built consensus about the most effective way to assess the special nature of family child care in light of the best of current research and practice. The accreditation standards help providers assess important aspects of program quality: relationships with children and families, the environment, activities offered to children, developmental learning goals, safety and health, and professional and business practices.

These Model Work Standards for family child care providers are meant to complement the accreditation standards and complete the picture of a high-quality program. Accreditation standards are broad in their definition of quality, and focus on the needs of children and their families in the family child care setting. The Model Work Standards focus on the provider's needs to sustain herself in this work so that she can give her best to the children and families she serves.

For more information on Family Child Care Accreditation, contact:

NAFCC
525 S.W. Fifth St., Suite A
Des Moines, IA 50309-4501
Phone: 515-282-8192. Fax: 515-282-9117.
E-mail: nafcc@assoc-mgmt.com
Web site: http://www.nafcc.org

A Note on the "Essential" Model Work Standards

The standards that are identified with a check mark in the right-hand column are those which we consider essential for a family child care program to meet in order to be recognized as a good work environment for the provider(s). We have identified these standards based upon one or more of three criteria: 1) Research supports them as predictors of program quality, 2) They reflect commonly-held standards of "best practice" in the field, or 3) They were repeatedly considered essential by the many family child care providers who advised us in developing these standards (for example, the importance of paid vacation, holiday and sick leave).

While more research on family child care quality is needed, the work of Kontos and her colleagues (1994) points to several important indicators of quality reflected in these standards. Their study of Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care concluded that family child care providers are more sensitive to the needs of children and offer more appropriate learning activities if they have specific training in child care and child development. Higher-quality family child care programs were found to be operated by providers who are committed to child care as important work that they want to do and that guarantees them a decent living. They also found that higher-quality family child care programs typically charge more than the average market rate for their services, and that providers in such programs are more likely to be engaged in support networks.

In addition, leading studies of child care centers in the U.S. have consistently shown compensation to be a key predictor of program quality (Helburn, 1995, Whitebook, 1990). It follows that appropriate compensation for family child care providers would enhance quality in this segment of the child care system, too, as well as encouraging stability and longevity in the field.

If you as a provider have also assumed the role of employer for other adults in your program, we refer you to our companion publication on Model Work Standards for center-based teaching staff. Many of the standards found in Part 4, "The Provider as Employer," are from this document, and are considered "essential" in providing a good work environment.

These Model Work Standards are presented as a basic set of guidelines for creating good family child care jobs, and the essential standards are suggested as starting points. We welcome your feedback and your suggestions.

Make a copy of this work sheet for each standard you address.

Model Work Standards
An Action Plan Work Sheet

The standard I am working to improve:

_____
_____
_____

What I have now:

_____
_____
_____

My goal:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Note: The goal may be to meet the standard fully at either the high-quality or striving level, or may simply be a step in the direction of meeting the standard.

Estimated cost, if any: _____

While some standards may require minimal or no additional resources, others may take significant financial investment. In the latter case, appropriate steps will include funding strategies. The actual cost should be calculated in your evaluation.

Outline for your Action Plan. See the other side of this work sheet.

Action Plan

Below, or on a separate sheet of paper, respond to the following:

I. **What needs to be done?** List the specific steps needed to meet the goal.

II. **When?** Create a timeline including the end point (when you hope to achieve the goal) and action steps along the way.

III. **Who?** While the greatest burden for creating change will fall on you as the provider, you should also identify parents, support agencies, and members of the community who could be helpful in reaching your goal. If you employ others in your family child care business, engage their participation as well.

IV. **Progress/Notes.** This action plan is likely to change or need to be re-evaluated along the way, as new opportunities and new barriers present themselves. Be open and flexible...but keep sight of the goal. Check on your progress frequently and keep those who are helping you informed. Keep a journal or notes for future reference, and to offer help or advice to providers who follow in your footsteps.

V. **Evaluation**: Answer the following questions. If you have collaborators, collect their comments as well:

Did I succeed in reaching my goal?

If so, how will I celebrate and broadcast the news?

If not, what barriers still confront me?

What did I learn?

What was the actual time and cost involved?

How do I feel about the process? How could I improve it?

What next?

References and Further Reading

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- **an educational tool** for articulating what family child care providers need in order to have a high-quality work environment.
- **an assessment tool** for evaluating how an individual family child care program measures up to providing a high-quality workplace.
- **a planning tool** for setting goals and measuring success.
- **an organizing tool** for enlisting the wider community—parents, professional associations, support agencies, business, labor, government, and the early care and education profession—in advocating for the resources that family child care providers need.

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